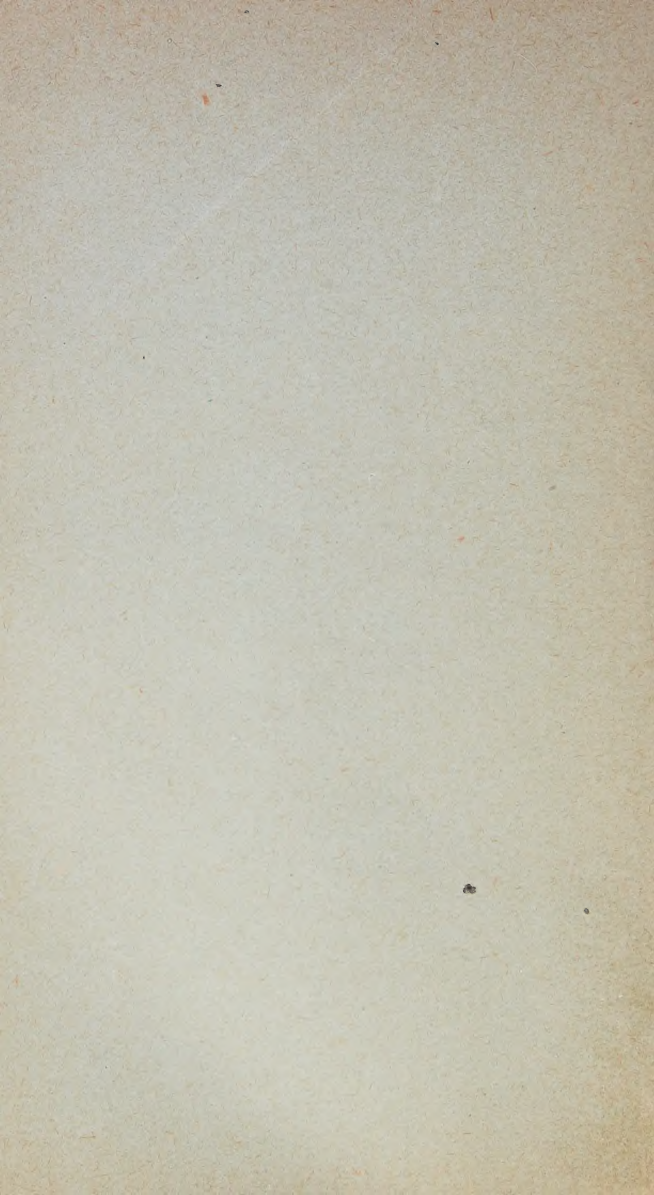


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Series V

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CHANNING,
AND THE
UNITARIAN MOVEMENT IN AMERICA
BY
W. C. GANNETT.

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“UNITY” SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS.

SERIES V.

CHANNING,

AND THE

UNITARIAN MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

BY

W. C. GANNETT.

Price, 15 cts. ; per dozen, \$1.25.

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WESTERN UNITARIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY,

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These twelve Lessons are intended as a six months' course for the older children and the adult classes. They are outlines for conversations, and can be used effectively only by a teacher willing to work. They aim to show what the essence of Unitarianism is, by using the combined light of Biography, History and Doctrine to illustrate it. The references are to the one-volume "Works" (American Edition), and the new one-volume "Life", of Channing.

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Lesson I.

THE BOY CHANNING.

1. "Factors."

The Birth-place,—Newport, R. I., Roger Williams' colony, founded for "freedom in religion." The beautiful island. The sea-port, rich with its slave-trade and its rum-trade; nine thousand people; European styles; fine dinners, intemperance, profanity. The "old Stone Mill;" the Library.—("The black Duchess," page 7. "The old cooper," p. 15.)

The Birth-time,—April 7, 1780. Midway in Revolution,—the Newport orchards all cut down, and many houses half-burnt, by the British troops just gone.—The day of cocked hats, ruffled shirts and small-clothes; of stately, "old-school" manners; of children strictly disciplined; of cold meeting-houses, catechisms, long sermons, solemn Sabbaths, and very reverend ministers indeed.

Grandfather Ellery, the "Signer." Fairness of mind his great distinction,—a religious principle. (p. 3.)

The Mother, little, quick-stepping and emphatic: truthfulness *her* marked trait, also. "True in thought, word, life. I cannot recall one word or action that betrayed the slightest insincerity," her son said. (p. 9.) (Talk about such "factors.")

2. The Chivalric Boy.

"The most splendid child I ever saw!" (p. 10.) "The Little Minister." (p. 13.) The lad looked like his mother,—little, straight and spry; loving to race, to wrestle, to climb the mast-heads. He was a *chivalric* boy; which means brave *and* gentle, brave *and* pure-minded. A boy who would tell the truth anyway; obey his mother out of sight; be thoughtful for the aged and forlorn; share his pocket-money with the boys; not take, but give, the advantage in the game; and say right out to the others, "Don't swear!" They called him

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“Little Peace-maker;” but he was no “girl-boy,”—once, at least, he flogged the big boy bullying the little one. Distinctly a “good” boy, however: “O, I can’t be like him. It’s not half so hard for him to be good as for me,” one answered the school-mistress. But model though he was, the boys more than liked him: “Though younger than I, I always *looked up* to him,” wrote one of them long afterwards. (Talk *into* these boy-qualities. “Among his playmates,” pp. 17-19.)

3. Two Lessons.

“I have never killed a bird.” (“The nest of birdlings,” p. 18.)
Acts speak louder than words. (“The revivalist,” p. 15.)

Lesson II.

CHANNING FINDING OUT WHAT HE WAS MADE FOR.

1. The Harvard Student.

Poverty. His father’s death. “All I had a right to expect from my friends was an education.” A fourteen years old Freshman. (Was it not the *greatest* of expectations?)

The Kind of Class-mate. His animated face, and buoyant, yet dignified manner, ringing laugh, and overflowing life. Reserved, yet very popular: one who *attracted the best to himself*. The pride and delight of his class. “This amiable and almost divine fellow!”—“He loved popularity, but it was the popularity that follows, and is not sought after.”—“It was remembered of Story and Channing that they invariably declined the use of wine, even at convivial entertainments.” (“Among his class-mates,” pp. 24-29.—What makes “popularity?”)

The Kind of Student. The first (*he* said, the second) scholar in the class.—“At your age I was poor, dependent, hardly able to buy clothes; but the great idea of *improvement* had seized upon me. I wanted to make the most of myself. I was not satisfied with knowing things superficially or by halves, but *tried* to get some comprehensive views of what I studied.” (p. 39.)

The Vision under the Willows of the possibility of a *perfect society*: this the dawning of “Channing’s great idea.” (pp. 32, 26.)—“In my Senior year I found for what I was made,”—the ministry of Christianity. (p. 39,—Luke II. 49: Matt. III. 16.)

2. The Lonely Struggle. (Matt. IV. 1-11.)

After leaving college he went for twenty months to Richmond, Va., as a private tutor: a painful season of enormous **inward growth**. “If I ever struggled with my whole soul for

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purity, truth and goodness, it was then." (p. 76.) History and the Bible were his chief studies now. The experience broke him down: he returned from Richmond an invalid for life.

The Young Monk, breaking his constitution. (p. 53.)

The Dreamer Waking up. "I found that virtue did not consist in feeling, but in *acting from a sense of duty*." ("The sonnet," p. 60.)

The Vow of Consecration. "I have now solemnly given myself up to God." (p. 74.) (Was this, "conversion?")

The College-Vision Brightening of a "perfect society." (pp. 63-67.) "Was man framed for himself or for his fellow-men?"—"Men must become conscious of the powers and *the dignity of their mind*."—"I derive my sentiments from the nature of man."—"My political principles are branches of my moral system. You do not know what an *enthusiast for liberty* I have grown." (p. 50.)

Slavery at the South,—it means "every vice, heightened by every meanness, and added to every misery. Its influence on the whites is almost as fatal as on the blacks." (p. 47.)

3. Preparing for the Life-Work.

He returned to Newport and Cambridge, and for three years studied, largely by himself, for his ministry.

Self-Discipline.—Some of his rules: "I must not consider doing good as an accidental pleasure, but make it *the business of life*. Let me seek, not wait, for opportunities. God is Love. If I would resemble him, let me strengthen love. I feel now that a degrading selfishness reigns in my heart."—"When I feel irritable, let me be silent, let me quit society."—"Let me read no *enfeebling* productions."—"It is always best to think *first* for ourselves on any subject, and then to have recourse to others for the correction or improvement of our own sentiments." "I wish to have a few important truths impressed deeply on my mind, rather than to be lost in that chaos of universal knowledge which has hitherto distracted me." (pp. 77, 78, 88, 89.)

The Beach. "No spot on earth has helped to form me so much as that beach." (pp. 16, 41, 79.)

The Two Old Ministers, Stiles and Hopkins: two ways of teaching love of liberty. (pp. 13-15, 80-84.)

Thinking, pen in hand. (p. 87.)

The Call to the Federal Street pulpit: taking the smaller place. (p. 93.)

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CHANNING THE PREACHER.

1. In the Parsonage.

The Household. The mother-treasurer; the sisters’ perquisites; the closet-study and the attic-bed. A merry household all but he,—he absorbed in “subjects,” hiding in the study, solemn with “the load which weighed down my mind at the beginning of my ministry.” But “never a selfish act,” said his brother.—“In the morning, when I see any of my friends after the night’s separation, let me receive them as new gifts from God.”—(*Life*, pp. 98, 110-113.)

In the Study. His private papers show him toiling to shape himself to perfectness by self-examinations and self-disciplines.—“Let me do much in secret,—pray, struggle, purify myself for my people. Let none know.”—“My most painful, humble duties *first* and most attentively.”—“Whenever I enjoy, let me ask how I can diffuse this happiness: when I suffer, how I can relieve similar suffering.” (“As gems are formed,” *Life*, pp. 103, 300.)

2. In Society.

His Realness of Manner. “Mr. Channing asks how you do, and when you say you are well, he replies, ‘I am very glad,’ as if it were of real importance to him: and when he says ‘It is a beautiful day,’ you think of the morning of Creation when the sons of God shouted for joy!”

Parish-Calls. As a young man an indefatigable pastor. The title “Reverend” was most disagreeable to him. Among his rules for parish-calls: “Let my visits be ministerial, serious.”—In conversation let me feel I shall gain more by candor than by victory.”—“Let me draw persons from evil-speaking and injurious subjects by catching some thought suggested, and making it the ground for remark.”—“Pray stop: for if

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you go on, I shall feel bound to repeat every word to the person you are speaking of,"—"Let me every day give away something, and daily deny myself something that I may have more to give away." He never laid up a cent, and was often wholly destitute. ("Always poor," *Life*, pp. 111, 129-131. "The two insane and aged paupers," Miss Peabody's *Reminiscences of Channing*, p. 41.)

3. In the Pulpit.

The Sermons. The young preacher quickly grew popular; within six years the little society had to build a large new church; a dozen years more and he was *the* Boston preacher. Yet no anecdotes, no quotations, no illustrations even, made the sermons so attractive. They were sermons in one color,—Sermons from the Soul, of the Soul, to the Soul; sermons of "the Perfect Life," "the Life of God in the Soul of Man." It was the man in the sermon that was the illustration.

The Preacher. "Delicate in frame, but of a great presence." (Dewey.) "Scarce body enough to anchor his soul to earth." (Bellows.) A wide, clear brow, with eyes deep, large, yearning, "so communicative that his friends disputed about the color which was lost in the expression." (Bartol.) "That wonderful voice, thrilling one as if it issued from the inmost deep of the spirit." (Furness.) "Henry Clay's voice was called a band of music, Webster's was a trumpet, Channing's was a harp. What is saturated with spirit goes, though in but a whisper from the lips: how his syllables went into the congregation and sought out every cranny in the galleries!" (Bartol.) His reading of the Bible was more than any commentary: and "into the hymns he read more than I could afterward find." (Emerson.) Of his prayer,—"I was thrilled as never before by the thought of a man's communing with God face to face." (Miss Peabody, then a child of nine years.) After certain passages in his sermons, all over the church could be heard the sound of people drawing breath.—"Preaching was the great action of his life." (Dewey.) ("A Sunday morning in Federal St. Church," *Life*, pp. 386-9.) See, also, the *Channing Memorial Number of "Unity,"* for April 1, 1880.

4. The True Preacher, sketched by Channing himself.

The Consecration. "No man is fitted to preach or promote Christianity, who is not fitted to die for it." (*Life*, p. 381.)

The Preacher's Associates. A fellow-worker with the reformers, martyrs, prophets, Christ, angels, God. (*Life*, pp. 302, 370.)

The Preacher's Central Truth, and the Test of his fitness.
"Your work is to preach the Perfect." (*Works*, p. 283. *Life*, p. 374.)

The Means to the Preacher's End. (1.) *Study*: Inspiration? Yes, but not to the idle, passive mind. "Your parish must contain no harder laborer than yourself." (2.) *Inward Experience*: "Be what you preach." To see God, be like God.

How to Preach. (1) *Plainly, simply*. "Exaggerate nothing for effect,"—the pulpit-sin. "In the long run nothing is so strong as simplicity."—(2) *Earnestly*. Fervent in delivering your discourse, but "rather, fervent in preparing it."—(3) *With moral courage*. "Honor all men; love all men; but fear none. Wait not to be backed by numbers."—(4) *Feel the greatness of your office*. "Greater than thrones." "The divinest art is that which awakens the god-like in the breast of our brother."—(5) *Conditions of true eloquence*. Only possible when great principles have become the very substance of the soul. (*Life*, pp. 303-6.) (For above passages, see the "Charge at Dwight's Ordination" in 1840, in *Works*, pp. 283-290. Golden words, the whole of it,—Channing's "Epistle to Timothy." Other noble thoughts on the Ministry, *cabinet-ed* in *Life*, pp. 300-310, 362-383.)

5. Three Periods in Channing's Life.

It was an invalid's life, throughout. By 1824 he had to ask his people for a colleague, and from that time on gradually withdrew from work in the pulpit to work at the writing-desk, and spent long months of the year in Newport quiet. "I need several lives to do what I feel I have to do," he said: but, invalid as he was, he embraced three careers in his one life. He was (1) The Preacher and Pastor, 1803-1815. (2) The Religious Reformer, 1815-1830. (3) The Social Reformer, 1830-1842.—Before passing to the second, we must glance at New England Puritanism to know what he reformed.

(Talk into Channing's thoughts with the class,—and about sermons and church-going. What is the most interesting kind of sermon? the most impressive? the most helpful? Which of "the preacher's three P's,—Proving, Painting, Persuading," is the most important? Which had Channing? Have not the people any "three P's," as listeners? What are they? What good do you let yourself get from church-going? How can the people help their minister to preach well?)

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Lesson IV.

THE PURITAN FAITH OF OUR FOREFATHERS.

1. Saying the Catechism.

A hundred years ago, before Sunday Schools were invented, the children of New England "said the Catechism." "It was taught in the family, the school, the church. We had it for breakfast and we had it for dinner and we had it for supper." "Catechizing Day," when the youngsters were examined by the minister in the meeting-house before all the folks, was the great and trembling day of the year! *What* Catechism? The shorter "Westminster Catechism," drawn up in London in 1647. The famous "Primer" which contained it was the classic of New England, and "has done more to form the New England character than any book except the Bible." (*The Talk*.—See "Catechism" and "Assembly" in *Cyclopædia*.—Which way best,—Catechisms or Sunday Schools? Which *fills* the mind most? Which *opens* it most? How can religious teaching both fill *and* open it?)

2. **The Puritan Creed**, as taught in this Catechism and its explanations, may be summed up as follows:

(1) *The Bible* is the literal Word of God,—each verse a "Thus saith the Lord," forever binding. (This belief is the *bed-rock* on which Protestantism was built at the Reformation.)

(2) *God* is a "Trinity," *i. e.* three Persons in one,—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *Jesus Christ* was God in human form: and this God-Man died on the cross, to save men from being punished for sin, —his agony being accepted by Divine Justice as a substitute for theirs. (These two beliefs about Christ, called "Incarnation" and "Vicarious Atonement," are the two *corner-stones* of Orthodoxy.)

(3) *Men* are born totally corrupt in consequence of Adam's garden-sin. All, therefore, lie under God's curse; all liable to Eternal Hell. But God graciously saves *some* of them, as just said, by accepting Christ's sacrifice in place of their own Hell-tortures; and these he calls by his Holy Spirit, irresistibly, to repent and believe in that blood-bought redemption. In his mere good pleasure he fore-chose these out of the race, ages before their birth; and in his own good pleasure leaves the rest to be born, helpless to escape the awful doom which birth imposes on them. Men are divided, therefore, into the "elect" and the "non-elect," the "saints" and the "sinners,"—and this on grounds other than those of their own character. (These beliefs about Man we may call the common *living-rooms* of Puritanism,—old rooms, rebuilt by Calvin.—*The Talk*. What is the Roman Catholic's "bed-rock?" (Matt. xvi. 18.) See "Calvin" in *Cyclop*.—Speak of this Catechism-creed as still the creed of our Presbyterian, and, in substance, of our Congregational churches: but show that "in substance" means softening, crumbling, being outgrown,—e. g., "Election," "Eternal Hell," "Verbal Inspiration." The shells *vs.* the kernels of doctrine.)

3. The Appalling Faith: its Ground, its Good, its Harm.

What think you of this faith? Does it not make God out to be a Devil, and Man a helpless worm beneath his feet? Yet do it justice by remembering (1) *its ground*,—that both the Bible and the mysterious tragedies of Nature seem, here and there, to teach it. Jesus teaches something that sounds like "Eternal Hell," and John something like the "God-Man," and Paul something like "Original Sin and Vicarious Atonement and Election": and the Puritan's belief in their words as the very words of God led them to take this nightmare of Calvinism for eternal truth. The Bible put out for him the eyes of his common-sense and conscience.

(2) *Its good*. Remember, too, that Puritanism had a noble side—intense faith in God's ever-present providence and in his sovereign law. This was the secret of its strength. To fear God as the Puritan did was to be fearless of man. So its glory was the strong, self-reliant energy of character such loyalty produces. Calvinism, Bible-slave as it was, made three nations who believed in it hero-nations in the cause of the people's liberty,—the Hollanders, the English under Cromwell, the New Englanders.

(3) *The reproach* of Puritanism was its narrow mind, its dogmatism, its intolerance, its untenderness, its denial of imagination and the sense of beauty,—and the grim character it thus produced. (*The Talk*.—To do justice to another's creed, or to our own, is to see both its good and its poor sides. Cannot a poor creed be helpful? Does creed make character or character make creed? Creeds *vs.* Deeds. What *is* a "creed?" One's double creed,—his church-creed and his real life-creed. Why object to creeds? Are they necessarily hurtful? Have not you one? If *yes*, how did you get it? If *not*, is it because you are thoughtful or thoughtless?)

4. Puritan Society.

In primitive New England the State was a Church; the land, a Hebrew Palestine; only church-members voted; the meeting-house was supported by taxes like the Public School; the ministers and deacons the leaders of society; church-going the universal custom; the Sabbath a hushed and awful day; the home-life bathed in family-prayer; "Special Providences" an every-hour affair; the Bible the almost sufficient library; pictures, music, poetry, superfluous and suspected; wigs, saint-days, Christmas-keeping, Bishops, hated; Free-thinkers, abomination; a Roman Catholic, Babylon!

On the whole, an admirable faith to have had in one's grandfathers—and to outgrow; provided we outgrow only its inglorious side. (*The Talk*.—See "Puritan Boston" in *Atlantic* for Feb., 1880.)

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Then came our Revolutionary War. The love of liberty spreading from State to Church, sufficed to "disestablish" the Churches, but not to shatter much the power of their creed. Still, it slowly weakened. By 1800, in country-corners, North and South, there were open rebels from the reigning Calvinism. One band, the "*Universalists*," was shouting "Salvation sure for all!" Another, the "*Christians*," was singing "Let names and creeds and parties fall, and Jesus Christ be all in all!" And before long both bands abandoned, further, the "two corner-stones of Orthodoxy." (Lesson IV.) But every Yes and every No in their creeds they still proved by the "Bible-rock," quoting chapter and verse as literally as the Orthodox themselves.

(*The Talk.*—Three branches to the tree of Calvinism, then: Our "Presbyterians"=the old trunk grown nearly straight up; our "Congregationalists,"=Dr. Hopkins' "rational Calvinism" grown out longer; and over that garden-fence stretches the slim Unitarian off-shoot.—See "Samuel Hopkins" and "Arminius" in *Cyclop.*—For Universalism, see "Murray" and "Ballou" in *Cyclop.*—The "Christians" and the "Disciples" or "Campbellites" are close akin.—Explain "disestablish." Illustrate by the State-Churches abroad, in contrast with the American "Voluntary System." Show how this system in itself was a great advance in religious liberty.)

3. The Unitarians before Unitarianism, 1800-1815.

A third and quieter set of dissenters had slowly grown up around Harvard College,—children of the "Arminians." City-folk these; the Boston ministers their leaders. Loyal Bible-men, again; but broader and bolder in thought, though more timorous in word, than their country-cousins just described. Called "*Liberals*." Their watchwords, "*Few Fundamentals in Religion*," and "the Right of Free Inquiry." Open anti-Calvinists; but, in 1800, with minds not quite made up about the Trinity and the Atonement,—little said on those points in their pulpits. During the next fifteen years, however, thought ripened fast among them. The Orthodox grew restless and aggressive: the Liberals more and more pronounced, though anxious to avoid an outbreak. Many signs foretold a coming storm.

(*The Talk.*—Episcopalian "King's Chapel" in Boston was the first church in America to ordain a professed Unitarian (1787), and Jas. Freeman was the man. The boldest Liberals of the 1800-1815 period were Buckminster, Thacher and Norton,—young men all three. Such pulpit-silence and vagueness always marks a broadening Orthodoxy,—marks the "Broad Church" party of every sect: how far is it honest and noble? how far cowardly and "of little faith?" How like you their mottoes? Or this,—"*In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity?*")

4. The Unitarian Controversy, 1815-1830.

At last, a flash beyond the sea! the publication in London of some *Boston letters* that described this non-committal Liberal-

ism in vogue. The tell-tale letters were reprinted here; and then the Orthodox thunder pealed: "See the Boston ministers,—Unitarians and hypocrites!" That charge roused the silent brotherhood,—the "Unitarian Controversy" began! (1815.)

Channing, till then a quiet parish-minister (Lesson III.), answered the Orthodox attack. "Yes, Unitarians we are," he said; "but not in the usual English sense however; for Christ, although not God, is much more than man to most to us." As to the pulpit-silence, that he glorified: "*Not* hypocrisy! but self-denial, rather,—to avoid useless and embittering controversy. We preach the truth as it seems to us, and say very little about speculative error." And were they less Christian because un-Trinitarian? "Nay. The Bible itself is vague about Christ's nature and the *way* of the Atonement: one sole belief is needful for Christian fellowship,—that 'Jesus is the Christ.'" Orthodox Dr. Worcester replied: "The Bible vague! These differences superficial! Why, set these aside, and what but Natural Religion is left?"

So the heresy was out, and the dear old Church of the forefathers broke in two!

Fifteen stormy years followed, as break by break occurred, with much heart-burning, in a hundred villages of Massachusetts. The Supreme Court's decision that church-property belonged not to the "church-members," but to the parish as a whole, left many an old "First Meeting-House" in the hands of Unitarian majorities. Throughout the controversy Channing kept the leader's place; not by the amount of what he said, but by its force and wisdom. The great debate, followed his startling Baltimore sermon (1819) on "Unitarian Christianity."

Organization, too, went on. In 1825 the American Unitarian Association was formed. By 1830 the young sect had a name, churches, chiefs, conventions, literary organs, and definite doctrines—although no "creed"; and, the best educated minds of Massachusetts being on its side, Harvard College, their inheritance, was largely under its control. A high-bred, intellectual, religious reformation!

(*The Talk*.—Do you agree with Channing or with Dr. Worcester,—or with both? Was the Court's decision just?—Why is religious controversy so bitter? Why is it usually on *surface*-doctrines? But note the improvement: two hundred years before, much less heresy drove the Pilgrims over the sea for safety; five hundred years before, less heresy was burning-matter for the stake. What is "heresy?" (Acts xxiv. 14.) Who settles what is "orthodox," what "heterodox?"—The great debate was that in which two Professors of the Orthodox Andover School faced two Liberal Professors of Harvard: Stuart against Norton, on the question of the Trinity: Wood against Ware, on the doctrines of Calvinism.—What is the difference between *beliefs* and a "*creed*?"

5. The Little Sect of Pioneers.

But just because Unitarianism was such a high-bred, intellectual reformation, it was confined to very narrow limits, and by 1830 the on-rush of its success was well nigh spent. It had then appropriated the already ripened Liberalism of New England; and educated Liberalism can never generate fresh material off-hand. So the Unitarians have always been a wee sect in the land.—Their main success since 1830 has been, within themselves, in the continued growth of their own thought,—the Act III. of the drama; and, outwardly, in a certain “leavening” influence exerted upon other sects. They have always been as *pioneers to Orthodoxy*. The “liberal Orthodox” of to-day is nearly the “Arminian” of a hundred years ago; the “conservative Unitarian” of to-day is the “Channing Unitarian” of fifty years ago; the “radical Unitarian” of to-day largely follows Emerson and Parker. And now the “Unitarian Movement” is merging in that far wider religious movement to which Science and Historic Criticism of late have roused the whole of Christendom, orthodox and heterodox.—But our story in these Channing Lessons ends with Act II. of the drama.

And now you know how we escaped the Catechism of the forefathers. But escaped to what? What *is* this “Unitarianism” that Channing taught? That question next.

(*The Talk*.—Note the four stages of a Reformation;—the long, slow, preparation; the sudden outburst and quick organization; the reaction; the silent growth again. Compare Luther’s Reformation.—What is “leaven,” and what its influence?—To grow in numbers, or in truth,—which glorifies a sect? To stand fast, or to move fast,—which most surely marks the truth-lover?—Will Unitarianism ever be popular? What good things in it hinder popularity? What lacks in it hinder popularity? Will it be failure or success for it to be lost in the larger movement,—“as morning drinks the morning star?”)

Remember that this is only the story of Unitarianism in *America*; and that modern Unitarianism is a resurrection rather than a birth. Jesus was Unitarian. So were the apostles all, even “John.” (See the New Test., everywhere.) So were the Christians of the first three centuries; not till A. D. 325 did the doctrine of the Trinity, gradually growing, get its shape. (See almost any Church History.) Through the Dark Ages we scarcely hear of Unitarians; but at the Reformation-time there were a few famous Unitarians, whom their brother-reformers treated very cruelly as heretics. (See “Socinus” and “Servetus” in *Cyclop.*) Since then their followers have maintained a few churches in Transylvania in England and Ireland there is a second little group of Unitarian churches,—the result, as here, of gradually outgrown Calvinism, and dating some fifty years earlier than ours. (See “Emlyn,” “Priestley,” “Lindsey,” in *Cyclop.*) Ours here, make the third and only other group of such churches. The tiny sect! But there is a great deal of vague Unitarianism now in Orthodox churches; and a great deal of *unchurched* Unitarianism.

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Lesson VI.

THE THREE POINTS OF UNITARIANISM :

(I) THE SUPREMACY OF CHARACTER.

What is this Unitarianism, which Channing and his brother-Liberals taught ?

1. **Its Name** hints its belief that God is One, and that Jesus Christ was but the Son of God: whereas the vast majority of Christians are "Tri-unitarians," believing that God is Three in One,—**"the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;"** and that Jesus Christ, the second of the three, is the Eternal God made visible in human form 1880 years ago. In the early Christian centuries Church Councils were held, books were written, mobs howled, blood was shed, to settle these mysteries of God's three-fold and Christ's two-fold nature; and the Trinitarian opinions have been "Orthodoxy," i. e. the "right belief" ever since, while Unitarian opinions have been called "impiety, infidelity, atheism." Our New England Liberals came to think the Orthodoxy contrary both to Reason and the Bible; and it was this old heresy, come new again, that gave them name. (*Works*, 371-5; 388.)

But to the Liberals themselves this seemed a small point, after all, compared with another matter. It was not so much the human form as the *inhuman character* of the God of Calvinism that made them heretics,—them and the Universalists. This God of Orthodoxy was contrary to *Conscience*, also. "The great controversies in the Church," says Channing, "may all be resolved into one question,—Is God indeed perfectly *good*?" (*Life*, 190.)

(*The Talk*.—Why did they of old time care so much to settle those mysteries? See "Councils" in *Cyclop*. Why care so little now? Is "Three in One" a greater mystery than "All in One, and One in All?" Are not you yourself a mysterious "Two in One"—soul and body?

Why not accept the Trinitarian mysteries, as well as these?—Does the “God-Man” make God more real to *your* mind? May it not to many? And, in case you thought mankind corrupt by nature, would it not be relief to believe in one man who was God by nature?—The Universalist heresy turned still more on the inhumanity of Calvinism. (See Lesson V.) The Unitarians were rationalists, besides. (See Lesson VIII.)

2. The Three Great Beliefs of Unitarianism, in contrast with the Puritan creed:—

- (1) Belief in the Supremacy of Character.
- (2) Belief in the Nobility of Human Nature.
- (3) Belief in the Use of Reason in Religion.

A Lesson, now, on each of these three points,—listening to Channing all the while.

(*The Talk.*—Contrast the “Five Points of Calvinism.” See *Cyclop.* Tag them for memory by a catch-word made of their initials, **PROS-PRIG-PS.**)

3. The Supremacy of Character.

(1) *In God: Perfect goodness, not omnipotence, the essence of God.* Calvinism said the “Sovereignty,” Unitarianism said the “Fatherhood,” of God. It was only a difference of emphasis, for, of course, each added the other’s word to its own: but, practically, emphasis makes a great difference with doctrines. What the Calvinistic emphasis led to, we saw in Lesson IV., — predestination, eternal Hell, vicarious punishment. The Unitarians and Universalists thought,—All this would be diabolical; not even human; much less, divine. The Bible, if it seems to say it, is misunderstood. The righteousness of God makes it impossible. —“We believe in the Moral Perfection of God. Not because his will is irresistible, but because his will is the perfection of virtue, we pay him allegiance.”—(*Works*, 376, 317, 249.) “Is not the character of God as a Moral Parent, an Infinite Fullness and Fountain of Perfection, who has no other end in creation than to communicate his own life to his children,—is not this the truth of truths?” (*Life*, 377.)—“Leave us a God worthy of our love and trust.” (*Works*, 377 8; 396-8; *Life*, 185.)

(*The Talk.*—Is not every special trust, at bottom, simple trust in the Goodness of God? Try your faiths and see. Whence comes to us that central trust?—The doctrine of God’s *Love* may be exaggerated in its turn so as to ignore his *Justice*. Does not “Fatherhood” mean both? Can *true* love ignore justice? Do Unitarians make this exaggeration? Do Universalists?—Are the words, above, too strong,—“diabolical,” etc.? Is Channing’s “central gallows” an unjust word? Is it bigoted or harsh to use such words in the case? Which really seems the blasphemy—these words about such doctrines, or the doctrines themselves? Yet remember two things; that these doctrines are softened now by Orthodoxy,—only softened, however: and that each one of the cruel doctrines crudely symbolizes some great fact, some real law, of God’s Providence. Try them,—see if you can trace the kernel through the shell.)

(2) *In Jesus Christ: His character, not his office nor his inspiration, the glory of Jesus.*—"I desire, indeed, to know Christ's rank in the universe; but rank is nothing save as it proves and manifests superior virtue. It is the mind which gives dignity to the office, not the office to the mind. All glory is of the soul. The ground of love to Christ is his spotless purity, his moral perfection, his unrivalled goodness,—the resplendent image of the rectitude of God." (*Works*, 318.)—"Who best knows Christ?" (*Works*, 319.)—"I love Christ for" etc. (*Works*, 321.)—"To exalt human nature," to save it from sin, not punishment, was the purpose of his work on earth. (*Works*, 250-253.)

(*The Talk.*—Is Jesus more or less a helper, if we think of him as one who really *won* his character, as we have to win ours?)

(3) *In Man: Character, not feeling and not creed, the test of Religion.* The Unitarians were often charged with believing in "mere morality." The charge is, in essence, true: it is a charge that they believe in mere God-likeness.—"The true love of God is the same thing with the love of virtue, rectitude and goodness." (*Works*, 381.)—"The grand heresy is to substitute anything, whether creed or form or church, for character, for goodness, which is essentially, everlastingly and by its own nature, lovely, glorious, divine." (*Works*, 443-4.)—"Piety and Morality." (*Life*, 230-1.)

And all this is summed up in "Central Truths," (*Life*, 374-8;) or, more shortly, in a noble passage, "Moral Perfection, the Great Idea,—the very essence of God," (*Works*, 283;) or, still more shortly, in this definition of Religion: "True Religion is the worship of a Perfect Being who is the author of perfection to those who adore him. On this ground, and on no other, religion rests." (*Works*, 249.)

(*The Talk.*—What think *you* is "Piety," and what, "Morality?" With Channing's definition of Religion, compare F. E. Abbot's: "Religion is the effort of man to perfect himself." Which do you like best?)

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Lesson VII.

THE THREE POINTS OF UNITARIANISM :

(2) THE NOBILITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

I. Channing's "One Sublime Idea,—the Divinity of the Soul."

"One sublime idea has taken strong hold of my mind,—the greatness of the soul, its divinity, its union with God by spiritual likeness:" so said Channing of himself, and adds, "Preaching which is to do good must have its great idea." His own he so constantly repeated and applied that it made his sermons a lofty monotone. (*Life*, 445-6; *Works*, I.)

This, the second point of Unitarianism, was again in strongest contrast with Calvinism. Calvinism affirmed the "Total Depravity," Unitarianism the "Divinity," of human nature: and, this time, each heard in the other's word an awful blasphemy blotting all the truth! Yet, here as before, each really emphasized a half-truth. To both Religion was that which brought man nearer God: but in human nature Calvinism only saw the force which separates us from him,—"sin": Unitarianism saw that, too, but much more plainly saw the force which draws us toward him, "kinship." Calvinism thought human nature essentially *centrifugal* from Right, and looked elsewhere, to God's own direct drawing, for every motion towards him: hence the whole machinery of Grace,—vicarious atonement, irresistible conversion and salvation, —which left most scanty room for man's free will and virtue. It seemed as if the more corrupt, abject and helpless man was, the greater was the glory of God the King, who saved him. Unitarianism thought human nature

itself *centripetal* to Right ; that the saving Grace was lodged, that is, in its very constitution, and that "sin" was but the pull-away of a free will not yet perfected : and so, the more erect, the more God-like man was, the greater the glory of God, his Father and Creator. Or more shortly, thus : Calvinism saw in man, since the "Fall," a temple *ruined* : Unitarianism saw in man a temple incomplete because *still building*. A difference wide as heaven and hell this made in the doctrines.

Now for illustrations. Read Channing's two sermons called "Likeness to God" (*Works*, 291-302) and "Imitableness of Christ's Character" (310-316), and his "Introductory Remarks" (1-7), and you will read the very heart of the man and of Unitarianism.—"All minds are of one family." (*Works*, 313.)—"The soul an image of the infinity of God." (*Works*, I ; 294-5 ; *Life*, 444.)—"What a man is." (*Works*, 48.)—"Nothing in Jesus to which men might not ascend." (*Works*, 314 5.)—"Virtue, not Sin, the essence of the soul." (*Works*, 70 ; 300.)—"It is a false idea that religion requires the extermination of any principle or passion in us. Our nature is a beautiful whole, and no part can be spared." (*Works*, 340.)—"God-like men." (*Works*, 298-9 ; 346.)—"The parent's highest office is to bring the child to consciousness of the divinity within him." (*Life*, 442.)—"The noblest use of travelling is to discern more of the God like in the human." (*Life*, 346.)—"The sight of every human being should be accompanied with the thought of the grandeur of a human soul." (*Life*, 302.)

(*The Talk*.—"Divinity" of soul, i. e. God-likeness, not deity. In same sense, "Divinity of Christ."—Which of the two ideas of human nature, think you, was nearer right? Get class to mention signs of depravity in us and signs of divinity, before reading in Channing. Why *total* depravity, if not total divinity? Would the terms "*native* depravity" and "*native* divinity" be true? Explain the theologic doctrine of the "Fall" and "Original Sin"; its half-truth; and how the new scientific doctrine of "Heredity" affirms bequests of divinity as well as of depravity.—The "sense of sin,"—are Unitarians without it, as charged? Does their system slight it? Yes: yet see Channing's answer in *Life*, 378; *Works*, 300; 347.—Which view of the soul, the Unitarian's or Calvinist's, is the "pale negation?" And which the *lurid*? Which of the two views, think you, is gaining ground? Orthodoxy has immensely modified its tone on this point, also,—except in Revivals.—For New Test. views of the divinity of the soul, see Matt. V. 48; John I. 4, 9, 12; Acts XVII. 28-29; Rom. VII. 22, 23; VIII. 5-17. Among heathens the "God-likeness" of the soul was a household word of Platonism; and for the Stoic thought of its divinity, see Epictetus, I. 3. 9; II. 8.)

And now see how this "one sublime idea," the God likeness of the soul, echoes through all Channing's thought :—

2. This the Foundation of Religion.

The soul only knows God in and from itself. Piety is the child-soul's attraction to its Father.—"At the foundation."

(*Works* 313.)—"To rob man." (*Works*, 3.)—"The idea of God, sublime and awful as it is, is the idea of our own spiritual nature, purified and enlarged to infinity. In ourselves are the elements of the Divinity. (*Works*, 293; 6.)—"What, then, is Religion?" (*Works*, 296.)—"Then the divinity is *growing* within us." (*Works*, 298; 292.)

3. This the Foundation of Faith in Immortality.

Channing believed that Jesus by his teaching and resurrection had changed the vague hope of immortality to a certainty; but he loved to trace the signs of immortality in the nature of the soul. (*Life*, 244-9.)—"My faith in it rests very little on mere affection, but very much on the fact of human excellence. Virtue is the only thing in the universe of the continuance of which I am sure; for it is of the very essence of God. Everything else may pass away; this cannot." (*Life*, 628.)—"The undoubted fact that the mind thirsts for continued being just in proportion as it obeys the will of its Maker is a proof, next to irresistible, of its being destined by him for immortality." (*Works*, 356.) "I see in crime itself (four) proofs of human greatness and of an immortal nature." (*Works*, 357.)—"The soul and the tree:" four arguments for immortality. (*Works*, 354-6.)—"One angel's history may be a volume of more various truth than all the records of our race." (*Works*, 365.) "I think of Heaven as a world of stupendous plans and efforts for its own improvement." (*Works*, 365.)—"The whole present creation perhaps a dungeon and a hell to the sinner, after death." (*Works*, 353.)

4. This the Foundation of Brotherhood.

"Men have as yet no just respect for themselves, and of consequence no just respect for others. There is one principle of the soul which makes all men essentially equal, the sense of duty. This power makes the seraph and the lowest human being, brethren. Do we understand our spiritual brotherhood? Do we feel ourselves derived from one Heavenly Parent, in whose image we are all made? This seems to me the only true bond of man to man." (*Works*, 67-9.)—"The secret of Jesus' brotherhood with men: "In the most depraved he saw a being who might become an angel of light." (*Works*, 309-10; 327.)—"You (Abolitionists) take your stand on the unutterable worth of every human being, and on his inalienable rights as a rational, moral and immortal child of God." (*Life*, 568.)

(*The Talk*.—Read Epictetus' little chapter, I. 13.)

5. And of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

“A new reverence for man is essential to the cause of social reform. The import of the word “Brother.” Then wrongs, now hardly thought of, will give a deeper shock than *we* receive from crimes which the laws punish with death.” (*Works*, 7.) —“A new reverence for humanity, a new feeling of brotherhood and of all men’s relation to a common Father,—before this all oppressions are to fall,” etc. (*Works*, 924 : close of Channing’s last Address.)

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Lesson VIII.

THE THREE POINTS OF UNITARIANISM :

(3) THE USE OF REASON IN RELIGION.

1. **Free Inquiry in Religion**,—that, as compared with Orthodoxy, is the *third* principle of Unitarianism. It follows directly from the second ; because reverence for human nature as "divine" meant reverence for man's Reason and Conscience (*Works*, 338), and contempt for it as "totally depraved" meant contempt for his Reason and Conscience. Before the Bible, therefore, Calvinist and Unitarian parted company again, though not so widely this time as before. To both of them the Bible was a miraculous Revelation, a gracious message from heaven, sent to eke out the light of Nature : but to the one, chapter and verse *were* the message ; to the other, they only *held* the message, whose meaning had to be made out from its words, as from any other words, by common sense. If aught in the message seemed irrational, the Calvinist with loyal logic said, "It is God's Word ! Man's reason must accept, not criticise, it." If aught seemed immoral, "It is God's Word ! Man's conscience may not judge its Maker." Whereas the Unitarian said "Reason and Conscience are the divine Word *in* us, the Holy Book is the divine Word *out* of us : the two must harmonize,—God cannot contradict himself : and if they seem to clash, it is the outward that must conform to the inward, the Bible with Reason, not Reason with the Bible." That prostration of Reason and Conscience to the Bible resulted in the mysterious and cruel doctrines of the Catechism, (Less. IV.), while this partial freedom within the Bible limits led to the Unitarian Reformation.

(*The Talk*.—Illustrate the doctrine of "verbal inspiration," by which the Bible has so often been employed to "hold the fort" for crimes and

superstition ; e. g. for slavery, witch and heretic-burning, war-cruelties, woman's subjection, intemperance. Idolatry, Bibliolatry, Christolatry,—a long help and a long (longer?) hurt in each one. And can man worship *Reason* to his hurt,—make that an idol, also?—On this third “point,” as on the other two points, Orthodoxy has immensely modified its tone. Almost every sect now has its broad or rationalistic party, and the whole lump is leavened by it.—Whose conscience should the child follow, his own or his father's, if they clash? What difference between this case and the one above?)

2. Why Revelation as well as Reason.

Listening again to Channing, notice, in the first place, what made him and his friends believe in Revelation as well as Reason : it was because Christianity seemed to them “Reason in its most perfect form.” (*Works*, 246.) Because “its inward evidences grow important in proportion as the human mind makes progress.” (*W.* 274.) Because its very purpose was to “liberate and raise the human mind.” (*W.* 250.) “Christianity a *rational* religion,”—Channing never tired of proving, illustrating, repeating that, against Orthodoxy on the one side, and against Unbelief on the other.

(*The Talk*.—In all this does Channing seem to you, to *idealize* Christianity,—its proofs, its character, its influence,—or not?)

3. But Reason must Interpret the Revelation.

Almost at the opening of the controversy Channing told his comrades that “the great question between the Orthodox and the Liberals is *not*, whether the Trinity or vicarious atonement or innate sin be true; but a broader question,—How far is Reason to be used in explaining Revelation?” (*Life*, 220.) —“The Bible written for men.” (*Works*, 368, 237.)

(*The Talk*.—The Bible a literature, not a book,—an oriental literature,—an ancient literature,—1500 years in writing : disuse of reason in explaining such a book is necessarily an abuse of reason. But *could* Calvinism be wholly loyal to its principle of disuse?)

4. And Reason must Judge the Revelation.

Here are bold words,—he often said others like them : “The truth is, and it ought not to be disguised, that our ultimate reliance is and must be on our own reason. Faith in this power lies at the foundation of all other faith. Reason is the very faculty to which revelation is addressed, and by which alone its evidence can be weighed (p. 236) and its meaning explained. A contradiction between reason and a genuine revelation cannot exist. A revelation from the Author of our rational nature will certainly be adapted to its fundamental laws. If, after an impartial use of our best faculties, a professed revelation seems to us plainly to disagree with itself, or to clash with great principles which we cannot question, we ought not to hesitate to withhold ~~from~~ it our belief. I am surer that my rational nature

is from God than that any book is an expression of his will." (*Works*, 337-8.) Appealing to this Judge, Channing therefore throws out from Christianity what he calls its "human additions." (*Works*, 243.) "Christianity contains no such doctrines." (*Works*, 467.)

(*The Talk*.—"Ultimate reliance must be," etc: Show that true by tracing home any faith whatever, e. g., the infallibility of Pope or Bible.—Room for talk and questioning,—but, first, for *thought*—in every quotation in this section and the next. They are test-sentences by which to measure the width of one's religious liberty. Do they seem wholly true to you, or not?)

5. Reason must Judge concerning God himself.

"It is an important truth, not yet sufficiently developed, that the ultimate reliance of a human being is and must be on his own mind. God is not unintelligible because incomprehensible. God's goodness, because infinite, does not cease to be goodness, or essentially differ from the same attribute in man; nor does justice change its nature. We know not and cannot conceive of any other justice or goodness than we learn from our own nature; and if God have not these, he is altogether unknown to us as a moral being; he offers nothing for esteem and love to rest upon. Is it presumptuous to judge of our Creator? He himself has made this our duty in giving us a moral faculty; and has consequently waived his own claims on our veneration and obedience, any farther than he discovers himself to us in characters of benevolence, equity and righteousness. Besides, is it presumptuous to call God good? If the strongest marks of injustice do not prove God unjust, then the strongest marks of the opposite character do not prove him righteous. If we cannot judge of God, how can we trust him?" (*Works*, 462-7.)—"With such a Creator (as Calvinism teaches) the idea of mercy cannot coalesce; and more, under such a government man would need no mercy; for he would owe no allegiance to such a Maker. The wrong would lie on the side of the Creator." (*Works*, 396.)

6. The Soul's Liberty vs. Creeds, Sects, Intolerance.

With this high trust in Reason and Conscience as God's very light within us, no wonder that Channing warms and glows, as never besides, when he stands forward to defend the Soul's liberty against attack. He tells us how he was roused to take his part in the Unitarian controversy: "At such a period I dared not be silent." (*Life*, 270; 420.)—"Liberty in all its forms." (*Works*, 7.) "I call that mind free." (*Works*, 174: one of his noblest passages.)—"Always young for Liberty!" (*Life*, 601.

Or, to know Channing, read these passages: "I cannot but look on human creeds with feelings approaching contempt." Four reasons against them: (1) A rush-light to the Sun! (2) To cage the infinity of Christian truth! (3) They beget insincerity. "How deeply do I commiserate the minister who," etc. (4) They favor unbelief, mysteries that shock the reason being the staple of creeds." (*Works*, 486-9.)—"The spirit of Sects." (476.)—"Victims of Intolerance and Inquisitions." (180.)—"Pride of Reason." (238.)

(*The Talk*.—Are the "three points" of Unitarianism a "creed?" What think you of the four objections? Ought Unitarians to have a creed? Is Unitarianism a "sect?" Are these Lessons "intolerant?" Which is the noblest sentence in "I call that mind free," etc?)

7. Where shall we Stop?

The principle of Reason in Religion led to the Unitarian Reformation,—but did not end there. It led farther than its brave apostle saw. At Luther's Reformation Protestantism had been solidly built upon the Bible,—the Bible then displacing the Church as the supreme authority in religion. (Lesson IV.) Now, after three more centuries of growing light, Reason was beginning to displace the Bible,—a protest against Protestantism. Calvinism believed in the miraculous Revelation, and not in Reason, as authority in Religion; Channing and his friends believed in Reason *and* the Revelation; before long there were religious men believing in Reason and *not* in the Revelation. In the next Lesson we may learn why.

(*The Talk*.—"Where shall we stop?" This the famous frightening question with which minds scare themselves back to the nursery when beginning to leave it. Should it stop us *there*? How far should it influence our going? The two dangers,—stopping too soon, and not soon enough,—which, on the whole, more likely? "When I see farther, I will go farther," the truth-lover's answer. It was F. W. Newman's answer to his brother who became the Roman Catholic Cardinal.)

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Lesson IX.

"CHANNING UNITARIANISM,"— ITS TRANSIENT AND ITS PERMANENT ELEMENTS.

1. Three Strata of Belief in Unitarianism.

But are these three points,—the Supremacy of Character, the Nobility of Human Nature, the Use of Reason in Religion,—(Lesson VI.—VIII.) the whole of "Unitarianism?" O, no: but these are what mark it strongly off from Calvinism, and in these all Unitarians agree. These are its *characteristics*,—what you know it by, what it stands for among the Christian sects. But there are other great faiths common to it and Calvinism; and, again, other points, minor points, in which not even all Unitarians agree. There are *three strata*, as it were, in their beliefs. The deepest, common to all Christians and nearly all religions, holds the beliefs in God, the Soul, Duty, Immortality, etc. In Churches widest apart the sympathy is greater than the difference, after all. A middle stratum, common to all Unitarians but not to all Christians, holds the "three points." Then comes an upper stratum where Unitarians themselves divide, some thinking one way, some another: and thus divide in consequence of their very principle of Reason in Religion.—In the other Christian sects belief is stratified in the same way,—the deep, abiding, wide-spread faiths, below; sect-variations in the middle; individual opinions at the top: but—and our neighbors, especially if Roman Catholic, like it better thus,—“creeds” keep this upper layer thin except among Unitarians. Channing, when sending a book of his sermons to a friend abroad, wrote him, “What is here called Unitarianism,—a very inadequate name,—is characterized by nothing more than by the spirit of freedom and individuality. It has no established creed or symbol. Its friends think each for himself

and differ much from each other ; so that my book will give you my mind rather than the dogmas of a sect." (*Life*, 432.)

(*The Talk*.—Trace the three strata in different sects ; in Calvinism itself. Sometimes the top-stratum holds little more than *rites*. The Roman Catholic's fair charge against Protestantism is this tendency to split into sects and individuals in opinion : which party does the edge of the charge cut ? "Rome or Reason." Unitarians the Protestants of Protestantism. Does a Church's claim to be "*the Church*" seem to you a proof of Catholicity or of the opposite ? Can you imagine any Catholicity broader than the Roman or Episcopalian sort ? What is the Catholicity of Liberalism ? Read Samuel Longfellow's hymn, "One holy Church of God appears.")

2. The Transient and the Permanent in Religion.

Something more than this "strata"-fact is also true, this namely, that *each and every* religious belief has in it *two elements*, one permanent, the other transient ; so that all beliefs change more or less from age to age,—yet only change ; are mortal, yet immortal, too.—As a rule, the permanent part rises *in human nature* itself ; instinct, our unconscious reason, prompts it, and the conscious reason confirms it : while, as a rule, the transient part rises *in tradition*, and, at the farther end, is believed upon "authority." The points about which sects differ so hotly usually concern events said to have happened, or words said to have been spoken, hundreds of years ago. We quarrel over *history*!—And beliefs change because this historic part is apt to fade out as more light falls upon the past, while the permanent part takes on some brighter, larger, "truer" form. To day much in the venerable creeds of Christendom is fading out, because during the last hundred years we have come to understand vastly more about the past than ever was known before. Channing's Unitarianism itself was one result of the new knowledge.

(*The Talk*.—Dwell much on the two sources of belief : try to make the distinction very plain, testing given doctrines by it. It will help us to *proportion* our emphasis in religious matters rightly.—What is "believing on authority ?"—Quarrelling over history ! One thinks Christ, God ; one, superhuman ; one, the perfect human ; one, imperfect human,—all on historic evidence ! Do the four differ, therefore, about the moral ideal, about what "the perfect" is ? Is anything but this last very important ? Of the four, is not he who has the low ideal and low trust in its being God's real, the most of an "unbeliever ?"—Can we know and understand and judge a past age better than it knew and understood itself ?)

3. What is "Channing Unitarianism ?"

But Channing himself, besides the great beliefs common to all Christians, and the "three" which made him Unitarian, had, too, some very dear beliefs of this historic kind. He believed that the Bible was a record of successive miraculous Revelations ; believed in the superhuman Christ ; in his miracles ;

in his special commission and "authority" as a religious teacher; in immortality as made certain by his word and resurrection; in his character as the stainless reflection of God's perfection; in his Apostles, also, as teachers supernaturally inspired. True,—as his "one sublime idea, the divinity of human nature," opened on his mind, he came more and more to think of Christ as "human"; but always central in his view of God's dealings with the world stood a great, glorious, beneficent fact,—the Revelation of Christianity, in itself and in its circumstances a Miracle. In these ideas the men who with Channing first broke away from Calvinism, the fathers of Unitarianism, all shared. Many of their children still hold them true and very dear.—And when these views are added to our "three points," they together make what is sometimes called "*Channing Unitarianism*."—"Presumptions in favor of a Revelation." (*Works*, 193-6; 212-3.)—"Evidences of the Christian Revelation." (*Works*, 197--210.)—"On Miracles." (*Works*, 210--8; 221--6; *Life*, 446--451.)—"On Mr. Parker's views." (*Life*, 449--453.)—"The character of Christ original and unparalleled." (*Works*, 218--9; 227--9; 302--10.)—"Christ's character a moral miracle." (*Life*, 450 2.)—"Channing's views of Christ's nature." (In 1815, *Life*, 196--7: in 1822, *Life*, 311: in 1831, *Life*, 444.)—"Immortality confirmed by Christ's resurrection." (*Works*, 354; 359.)—"The Apostles." (*Works*, 430.)

(*The Talk*.—Perhaps no Christian sect has, on the whole, been more closely men of the New Testament faith than these elder Unitarians; and this through their belief in Reason *and* Revelation,—the first making them common-sense interpreters of the last. Their claim is good that the Apostles and early Christians were "Unitarians." How far is that a credit to this party? The Orthodox, more willing to sacrifice reason to literal constructions, have often missed thereby the Bible's meaning, unconsciously suppressing or exaggerating it, in the face of common-sense, to favor certain doctrines. On the other hand, the Radicals would regard it as no credit to be thorough-going Bible-men.—Note how the "one sublime idea" destroys the Orthodox idea of Incarnation by fulfilling it. And thus it often is: so look to find the larger truth in some thought that reconciles the differing doctrines in one that fulfils them all: not a "golden mean," however,—which may be a very different thing.)

4. Its Transient Elements.—What is "Radical Unitarianism?"

Now these views are just such as were spoken of as apt to change. They all refer to events of centuries ago, all depend upon historic evidence. Since Channing's death in 1842, the science of "Comparative Religion" has risen, the art of Bible Criticism has almost been made new, the idea of Evolution has

dawned ; and, in consequence, the history of all religions is being fast re-written. Channing lived just long enough to forefeel the coming ideas, and to watch young Emerson and Parker, children both of Unitarianism, abandon his belief in Revelation even as he had outgrown the beliefs of Calvinism forty years before. And, as then he and his friends had been but the first of a multitude, so now with Emerson and Parker : to-day we find the Unitarians divided, or rather "united," in two parties, one holding views like his on these historic matters, the other holding views that are more like theirs.

The latter party have followed "Reason in Religion" step by step, until the Bible seems no "Revelation," but a noble literature whose books record the natural growth of a religion ; in "miracles" they see sometimes mere fictions of man's reverent fancy, sometimes the hint of natural laws as yet not understood ; in Jesus they see no Heavenly Commissioner, but a noble soul whose life and death and teachings gave the natural impulse to a higher religion,—a man glorious because "he was true to what is in you and me."—It is *these* views added to our "three points" that together make what is called "*Radical Unitarianism*." In general, the younger Unitarians, and those of the West, are inclined to be "Radical" ; the elder, and those of the East, are more like Channing.

The Orthodox thinker would say of Channing's thought of Christ and Christianity, "It is transient, because too rationalistic." The Radical thinker, also, would say, "Transient ; but because not rationalistic enough."

(*The Talk*.—Tell what the science of "Comparative Religion" is.—"United : " the first historic use of the word (*Unitarius*) is said to have referred not to the doctrine of God's Unity, but to a "union" of those who agreed to differ about doctrines peaceably, viz., to "the Union of the Reformed Churches of all parties in Poland, in 1578, in passing an edict decreeing to all persons of all denominations the free exercise of their religion. From this *Union* they were called *Uniti* or *Unitarii*."—The difference between the two parties is exaggerated by extremists on both sides. Emerson, by his affirmations, is prophet unto all men, now ; Parker's iconoclasm still shuts him out from generous official recognition by Unitarians ; though many, like Dr. Channing, "send their love" to him. (*Life*, 453.)—Emerson's "Divinity School Address", of 1838, remains the eloquent statement of the views of the new Unitarians.)

5. Its Permanent Elements.

But what of Channing's thought is likely to *abide* ? His emphasis on the Supremacy of Character, in God, Christ, Man ; on the Nobility of Human Nature ; on the use of Reason in Religion. Each one of these "three points" the Orthodoxy of to-day is making more and more its own ; while the Calvinism,

whose cruel doctrines made the conscience shudder, and whose intolerance at the beginning of the century made the strike for freedom necessary, is retreating from the heart, mind, life and pulpits of "Calvinists" to the silence of their creeds. And so far as Radicals, too, have changed, it has been to throw still greater emphasis on these same three points. Again, then, Orthodox and Radicals unite, this time to testify, "*These* things are *permanent*,—part of the Christianity of the future."

Not that Channing, or that Unitarianism, has accomplished all the change: *he* was only "pioneer,"—*it* is only "leaven." And not that the Christianity of the future is likely to be called "Unitarianism" of any kind: it will rather be, and be called, a spiritualized Orthodoxy, Orthodoxy made rational and moral.

6. The Channing Centenary.

But the result of time on Channing's fame is that the leader of the little Unitarian sect is more and more recognized as belonging to the Christian Church at large,—a teacher of its central faiths, a Prophet of the Soul of Man. His writings are translated into half a dozen languages, and every year more widely known. Within ten years, two "Lives" of him have appeared in French; in English, three new volumes of Letters or Reminiscences, a new volume selected from his sermons, and cheap editions of his "Complete Works." This year (in April, 1880) the hundredth anniversary of his birth was celebrated, and, in the old world and the new, many men of many differing Churches joined to thank God that he had been born.

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AND THE UNITARIAN MOVEMENT IN AMERICA.

BY W. C. GANNETT.

(The references are to the one-volume "Works," Amer. Edition, and the new one-volume "Life," of Channing.)

Lesson X.

CHANNING AS A RELIGIOUS REFORMER.

1. Two Processes in a Reform.

Re-Forming means new-forming, e. g., a dress, a house, a continent, an idea, habits, character. What two processes are always involved? Is *any* "growth" possible without both? Then the same two processes are involved in a religious Re-formation: (1) The taking to pieces of old doctrines or institutions or rites. (2) The putting together of new. —Hence two kinds of Reformer, the "*Destructive*" and the "*Constructive*," according to the main work done by each. Each kind has its use: but the "leader," if there be one, usually unites both in himself.

(*The Talk*: Compare Storm and Sunshine as Nature's re-formers.—Examples of the "destructive,"—Paine and Ingersoll: which the greater,—the good, or the harm, of such "iconoclasm" as theirs? Examples of the "constructive,"—Calvin, Wesley: which the greater,—the good or harm of such system-makers? What made Luther instead of Erasmus leader of the Protestant Reformation? Compare Emerson and Parker.—The Reformer's motto, Matt. V. 17. Can one destroy with fulfilling? But can one fulfil without destroying? Are you "destructive" or "constructive" in *your* reforms?)

Now think back a moment: Lesson IV. showed the "*old* form." Lesson V. the "two processes." Lesson VI.-VIII., the "*new* form." Lesson IX., that the Re-formation is still going on. And now returning to Channing, what were *his* methods as Reformer?

2. Channing Mainly Constructive.

His denials were so strong and pointed that they startled, and so clear that they enlightened. He was as fearless for the truth as he was fearless of it. But controversy was the *accident* of his life. Speaking out as defender of liberty, he found himself suddenly in the front as defender of a faith. "At such a period I dared not be silent. To oppose what I deemed error was to me a secondary consideration. My first duty was to maintain the rights of the human mind." (*Life*, 270.) Yet a small book, eight or ten papers, would hold all he wrote controversially during the hottest years of the strife. (*Life*, 225.) He denied in order to affirm: his time and enthusiasm were spent, not on the negation, but on the affirmation,—on the reiteration, explanation, application of his "one sublime idea" in its many bearings.—"The most effectual way of expelling error is not to meet it sword in hand, but gradually to instil great truth with which it cannot easily co-exist, and by which the mind outgrows it." (*Works*, 275.)

3. No Personalities.

Through all the abusive years and through all his own plain-speaking, he never spoke ill of an opponent, never confounded belief with the believer, creed with character.—"Expose doctrines, let individuals alone."—"Not by the greatness of our light, but by our faithfulness to our light, character is to be judged." (*Life*, 422.)—"We must think no man the better for belonging to our communion, no man the worse for belonging to another." (*Works*, 438.)—"Infidelity a calamity, but no crime." (*Works*, 189-192.)—"The church-creed *vs.* the life-creed, of Calvinists." (*Works*, 386, 467.)—"Noble minded Dr. Hopkins, an example of the spirit of religious freedom with an appalling theology." (*Works*, 423 4.)—"Channing's strongest language." (*Life*, 272.)

4. No Organizer.

He distrusted so profoundly the tyranny of "party" that, champion though he was in Unitarianism, in Peace-work, Temperance-work, etc., in all these movements he stood off by himself. His *word* was his work. Never the *General*, therefore, only the *Prophet*, of the Unitarian Movement; and only in this sense its leader. Other, younger, men "organized" it.—"The chief strength of a Reformer." (*Works*, 735.)—"The test of as-

sociations,—do they stimulate *individual* force?" (*Works*, 142, 147-9.)

5. No Sectarian.

Leader as he was of the Unitarians, he would have none of their *ism*. Much as he loved their ideas, he knew these were not the final statement in religion. The term "Channing Unitarianism" as a goal of Truth, as the name for a new orthodoxy, would have shocked him. The grand "heretic" to him was the sectarian. (*Works*, 444.) The only Church that he belonged to was the great Catholic fellowship of all good and saintly souls. He could see the good as well as harm in the beliefs which he rejected : and what he loved first, last, better than all beliefs which he accepted, was the mind's freedom to form beliefs, the Soul's liberty.—"I have little or no interest in Unitarians as a sect." (*Life*, 427, 435. *Works*, 247.)—"I belong to the Universal Church ; nothing shall separate me from it." (*Life*, 195. *Works*, 247, 435-8.)—"The one true Church and Ordination." (*Works*, 432-4.)—"My church not necessarily the one for you." (*Works*, 432, 472-3.)—"On Roman Catholics." (*Works*, 436 8.)—"Petitioning for the Atheist." (*Life* 503-6.)

A wise old man called Dr. Channing "*an example to reformers*, because he showed them how to reform in order to conserve." What does that mean ? And does Channing seem to you the ideal Reformer ?

(*The Talk* : But is not organization necessary, in spite of its peril, to accomplish any social end ? How can the thousand whose "word" does *not* count, contribute to their cause ? Did Channing show his individuality or his individualism in this fear ?—Be sure to read his fine words at end of *Works*, 734: the right to bolt is the salvation of the party.—Do you think Unitarianism should aim to grow a solid, strong body,—or to remain "leaven ?" Can a body "whose creed it is to have no creed" ever be a strong body ? Is there anything besides *body* in a living being ? What is the Liberal *Spirit* ? Can you imagine a disembodied Spirit ? But which the more important to Liberalism,—its body or its Spirit ? Great Spirits in little bodies ! "Every country, like Judea, which lives for general ideas, which pursues a work of universal interest, sacrifices through the same its individual destiny : " is not that true of a sect, also ? Does 2 Cor. XII. 7-10 apply ?)

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Lesson XI.

CHANNING AS A SOCIAL REFORMER.

I. Channing's Last Twelve Years.

His Work at this time. Three periods in Channing's ministry, said Lesson III: first, the quiet *pastor* for a dozen years; then (1815-1830) the *religious reformer*; last, the Unitarian Controversy being over and the right of free thought in religion well established, from 1830 to his death in 1842 he appears as a *Social Reformer*, a Statesman of the "Higher Law," writing and lecturing on War and Intemperance, and specially on the Elevation of the Laboring Classes and on Slavery. First his parish, then New England, then the country, listened to him; and to parts of what he wrote on these last questions the world now listens, translating his words from language to language. He was so feeble during these years of private statemanship that often each hour's work was struggle. "I belong rightfully, to the great fraternity of working-men," he told the mechanics of Boston. "The longer I live, the more I have to do. We live in glorious times,—an age of moral revolution. Was there ever so much to do?" (*Life*, 516.)

Its Underlying Principle. Underlying all he wrote now was the same "one sublime idea,—the greatness, the divinity of the soul." Social reform, like religious reform, was to him but that idea in various application. This idea made the ground of his appeal to the people against War, to the drunkard for Temperance, to the mechanic for Self-Culture, to the rich for Brotherhood with the poor, to the slave-holder against Slavery. And this belief was the secret of his boundless faith in Social Improvement (*Works*, 924.)

Its Methods. And his methods in social were the same as in religious reform,—to state essential principles clearly, and leave details and practical plans to others; to address the mind and conscience, not the feelings; to separate an abuse from the abuser; to see both sides; to join no party, but do justice both by praise and blame to opposing parties,—alike to slave-holder and to abolitionist, for instance. It needed more than he and his sort to bring about reforms; but his calm voice reached ears on both sides that were usually deaf. Again then, a reformer to reformers. Listen to what Mrs. Childs thanks him for. (*Life*, 528, 456.) Do you say Yes to this next? “If by one wrong deed we could accomplish the liberation of millions, and in no other way, we ought to feel that this good, for which, perhaps, we had prayed with an agony of desire, was denied us by God, was reserved for other times and other hands.” (*Works*, 734.)

(*The Talk.*—The thinker’s workshop: what are his tools? What does he produce? Where do his wares go? Who are the harder day-laborers,—the hand or head-workers?—The calm voice reaches farthest, echoes longest. Why? Does it effect greater results? Which is best in the long run, brilliance, or balance, of mind?)

Now for some of Channing’s thoughts on the four subjects above mentioned,—good sentences to be talked *into*.

2. War.

The first American Peace Society first met in his study. (*Life*, 284.) “A nation’s battle-honor *vs.* her true honor.” (*Works*, 656, 660.) “A nation without reverence for right has no honor to maintain.”—Battle-courage *vs.* that courage which is humanity’s perfection.” (*Works*, 658.)—“The Napoleons of history are Murderers.” (*Works*, 663. *Life*, 278.)—“The military man is the only harlequin left us from ancient times.” (*Works*, 678.)—“Yet war is sometimes right.” (*Works*, 648. *Life*, 466.)

3. Intemperance.

“Its essential evil is that it is the voluntary extinction of reason. It is *right* that the drunkard should stand a monument of wrath among his fellows: right that society should be taxed for him. I would it were taxed more.” (*Works*, 100-101.)—“Moderate drinkers.” (*Works*, 58.)—“Why total abstinence.” (*Works*, 113.)—“Prohibition right.” (*Works*, 22, 114.)—“The best friend to Temperance.” (*Works*, 106.)—Yet Channing never took or advised the Pledge. (*Life*, 474.)

4. The Elevation of the Laboring Classes.

The uplifting of the poor Channing suggested as the *Unitarians' special mission*. (*Life*, 479-481.) He had much to do with forming Boston's reputation for generous charities. (The "Wednesday Evening Association:" *Life*, 465.) Sometime read slowly the whole of his address on Self-Culture. Here is the key-note: "A man is great as a man, be he where or what he may. *Man* is a greater name than President or King. The ground of a man's culture lies in his nature, not in his calling. It is the man who determines the dignity of the occupation, not the occupation which measures the dignity of the man. I know but one elevation of a human being, and that is Elevation of Soul." (*Works*, 12, 20, 19, 33, 42).—"No outward lot is degraded but that in to which a man falls by vice; and on this principle affluence is often as degraded a condition as poverty, for as many grow rich as grow poor by guilt." (*Life*, 480.). "Manual labor when united with means of spiritual culture, will probably be found more truly educational than any other vocation." (*Works*, 61.).—"The degree of aid given to the individual in every condition for unfolding his best powers determines the rank of a nation." (*Works*, 661.).—"Of all classes in society the poor should be treated with peculiar deference as the means of counteracting their chief peril—the loss of self-respect." (*Works*, 105.).—"What! strike a *man*! (*Life*, 11.)

5. Slavery.

The last few years of Channing's life were the "Martyr-Age of the United States." (*Life*, 532, 569.) The South was growing solidly and aggressively pro-slavery; in the North the dreaded watch-word "Immediate Emancipation" was rising. To side with the Abolitionists even in New England, was almost outlawry from "good society." Channing took position slowly, but openly and firmly, on their side, although not in their party, defending their principle and character while criticising their violence of speech. Again he had to stand by himself, above, rather than between, the parties. Eight or ten strong pamphlets were his contribution to the cause.

"Brother May, I acknowledge the justice of your reproof. I have been silent too long." (*Life*, 528-530.).—"The Lovejoy meeting in Faneuil Hall." (*Life*, 551-563.).—"The great argument against Slavery: What! own a *spiritual being*! Grow *men* like cattle! Sell one's *child*!" (*Works*, 695-6, 712, 716.)

"Better be slave than slave-holder. No fiend exhausting on us all his power of torture is so fearful as an oppressed fellow-creature. He may disarm the slave,—can he disarm the slave's Creator?" (*Works*, 706-921.)—"The slave-holder not necessarily wicked." (705, 811.)—"Channing's plan of emancipation." (726-9, 923.)—"Fugitive Slave Law *vs.* the 'Higher Law.'" (788, 848.)—"Rather Disunion than Slavery." (739, 891-7.)—"The two sublime principles of the Abolitionists: (1) Freedom of the Press; (2) the unutterable worth and inalienable rights of every human being." (*Life*, 566-8.)—"When a good cause suffers from the excesses of its friends, the true course is not to abandon it to despair, nor to surrender it to the frenzy of the populace, but to espouse and prosecute it with calm wisdom, enlightened zeal, and unfettered, fearless resolution." (*Life*, 534.)

Channing's predictions. "The South will secede." (*Life*, 534.) "Let Slavery be systematically proposed as the policy of the South, and a new feeling will burst out through the whole North. The fire, now smothered, will blaze out." (*Works*, 772.) "One kidnapped, murdered Abolitionist would do more for the violent destruction of Slavery than a thousand societies." (*Works*, 740.)—"Slave-holders themselves must initiate emancipation to have it a success." (*Works*, 725.)—"The fall of Slavery is sure." (*Works*, 770, 810, 924.)

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Lesson XII.

CHANNING AT HOME.

1. His Face.

And now, to end these Lessons on Channing and the Unitarian Movement, take his picture, the one in the "Life," and say what you see in it. It was painted three years before his death. Wide, thinking brows, the hair straying over; deep, large, yearning eyes; firm, straight nose; lips shut almost tightly; hollowed cheeks and strong chin. A *chiselled* face, strong, yet delicate,—is it not? Quiet through self-restraint,—through long *habits* of self-restraint, one would say. And there is some great and special thought behind that gaze: if he is looking at any person, he is looking *through* the person into *his* thought. You would feel serious and a little awed to meet this man; but you would *remember* him, and would feel sure he was a man who did Right.—Do you not see something like all this in the face? (*Life*, 671, 702.)

(A *Talk* on Faces as shaped by Character and revealing Life. Take Channing's picture with you to the class.)

2. A Life-long Invalid.

If you do, the face tells you the truth about the man. Constant languor, well resisted, has been the chisel; he *is* quiet through long self-restraints; there *is* a great thought constant in him; and people *were* made solemn by him. The "burden of half-health" was his from early manhood. "To deliver a short sermon without suffering," he esteemed "among the very happy events" of his life. Says a friend, describing a visit to his home, "One cup of black tea and one slice of brown toast was all that he could bear for breakfast,—the life-long penalty he paid for an

attempt to live on too little food when he first became a student of divinity, and thought thus to save the necessity of bodily exercise, and so redeem time for study. The effect was an incurable disease. He said, when telling me this, 'I learned by this natural penalty the sacredness of the laws of the physical system; that they, too, are the laws of God. Not being able to eat enough to support a man's body, I am unable to use my mind except for a small portion of the day. Of course there is compensation.'" (Miss Peabody's "Reminiscences" etc., p. 327)—This is one of the lessons of Channing's life. And a second is the way in which he saved and used the remnants of his body, with a sort of religious parsimony, for the good of men:—"A shattered constitution." (*Life*, 635-638)—"A pain-cure." (*Life*, 624.)

(*The Talk*, What was his "compensation?"—The *duty* of health-keeping. What did Jesus mean by saying so often, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*, when he made people better in their bodies?—The "laws" punish ignorance like sin: is it *punishment*?—Which is worse, to break your own constitution or your land's? The latter is a sort of a High Treason, is it not? What is the former?)

3. His Home.

But he was abundantly sheltered. When thirty-four years old, he married his cousin Ruth; and this love gave him a happy and wealthy home, kept simple by preference; and children came to make it happier. At forty-four, his people gave him a young colleague, full of energy, who gradually relieved him of almost all the pulpit and the parish-work. From this time on (1824-1842) Channing led more and more a thinker's life, slowly putting his cleared "views" into the "Works" which have lived after him.—a recluse, yet a philanthropist. Old friends remember him oftenest, perhaps, as a slight figure at the fireside corner of his parlor, or slowly walking, cloaked, in the sunny streets around the Common.

He had two homes,—the winter-home, of course, in Boston; but the early summer and late autumn found him in the beauty and country-quiet of "Oakland," near his Newport birth-place. In either place you could have watched him at the study-table. "He studies pen in hand, and his book is crowded with folded sheets of paper,"—to hold not notes of the reading so much as thought germs started by the reading; and the secretary is full of the little packages, sorted, filed and titled. When writing, first comes the careful skeleton; then a quick rough draft; then the exaggerations are struck out; and then, at last, with

all made clear and true to his own mind, the even flow of composition. No word to go to print until he felt sure of the sifted truth of his "great thoughts." "*Great* thoughts," he called them with a happy and growing consciousness that it was his vocation to think and utter them. "In my pen, paper, and a few books I have all the apparatus I need for the great objects of life. This is the happiness of every man who has proposed the discovery and diffusion of great truths as his end; and, in a better age this happiness will be a general possession." (*Life*, 691.)—"On marriage." (*Life*, 322.)—"A child." (325.)—"A wife's property." (320, 676.)—"Spending one's whole income." (675.)—"His reading and writing habits." (681-2, 300.)—"The fame he sought." (688.)

(*A Talk on Intellectual Conscientiousness: duty in thinking clearly, and stating exactly, and looking at the other side. The way this makes the mind grow. (Life, 452.) If you never print, do you ever talk? The same duty and growth-chance—only more of each—in private talk as in public writing. Why more?*)

4. Among Friends.

To these two homes he loved to welcome friends. It was the rule at "Oakland" to keep the guest-rooms full of old and young. And Dr. Channing was the sunshine in the house, —of the kind that made the little visitor exclaim, smiling through tears, "O, this is heaven!" But if scarcely a child with children, still less was he a man among men. He was shy of them; and men were shy of him. He had many friends who revered, few who knew him well. The very ministers had a stiff time when their meeting fell at his house. "His truthfulness made an interview solemn as a visit to the shrine of an oracle." A conversation with him was often an event in life. I remember conversations with him, I remember single phrases, and the tone in which they were uttered, as having made upon me an impression beyond the effect of whole volumes of moral disquisition." Dr. Dewey, who said this, calls "preaching the great action, conversation the ordinary action, of his life. It was not his relaxation, but his *action*:" for, with the right companion, all the day long, without ever slackening or turning aside to ordinary and common-place talk, he would pursue high themes of philosophy and religion and life. "Always he seemed to have a thought beyond everybody's thought that he conversed with." And yet he was noted for his *listening*, his singular deference to younger minds, his eager expectant relish for the fresh thought they might bring him.—"A day in the

Boston home." (*Life*, 681-5.)—"A day at Oakland." (663-6.)—"In conversation." (660-2, 671, 690.)—"Single phrases." (662, 672, 674.)—"Friends." (609, 663.)—"Not cold, but self-disciplined." (643, 663.)

(*A Talk on Personal Magnetism*,—what makes it? But what made the Kentuckian, who had never seen him, imagine Channing "six feet high at least and strong-limbed as a giant?"—Can a person be stiff with himself? What did the person mean who said of Dr. Channing that "he was kept from the highest goodness by his love of rectitude?")

5. His Delight in Nature.

We must read his letters, not his colorless sermons, to know that Channing had a poet hidden in him; that, for instance, "no spot on earth had helped to form me so much as that beach;" that every hour he was apt to leave his writing to visit the flowers in the garden; that the sunset was a holy hour with him, spent quietly at upper windows in the city, on a certain garden-path at "Oakland." Perhaps he saw God too plainly through the beauty, to let the poet grow. Nature to him was parable too quickly; read what the dandelion's globe suggests to him, or the "undertone" upon the sea-shore, (*Life*, 694, 626.) or this,—his "news:" "You want to hear our news, but the best and happiest life is that which gives nothing to speak of. My life is more and more inward, and this cannot be thrown into the shape of news. How can I convey to you the music of the trees this moment in my ear, made by a fresh south wind after a shower last night? And yet this is one of my *events*. Do you understand me, when I say that this solid earth and all that it contains seem to me more and more evanescent at the very moment that they reveal to me the Everlasting?" (*Life*, 650. Also 693, on the whereabouts of new Creations.)

(*The Talk*.—Is such a man a poet, or *not*-a-poet? Can there be poetry without pictures,—as "songs without words?" Is it when there is much, or little, "imagination?" One of "the poetic order of philosophic minds," Channing has been called. But others say "no philosopher," and the "poet" hardly shows. What *was* he, then?)

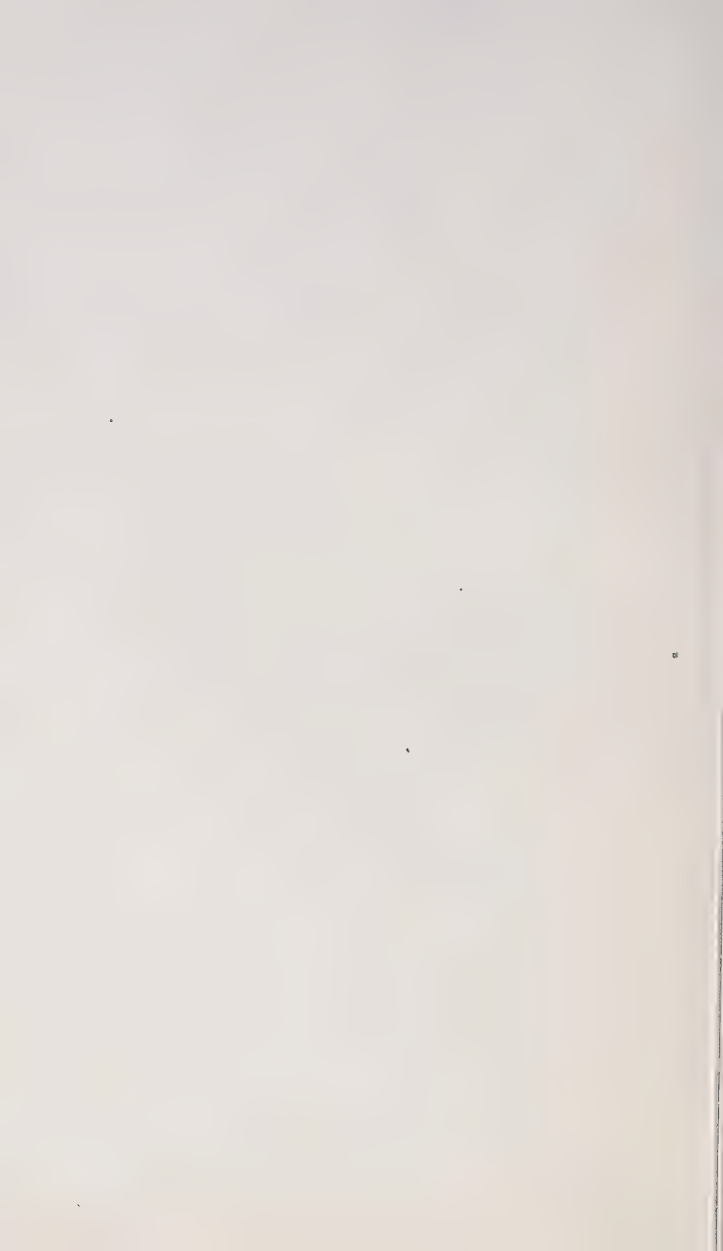
6. His Last Years

were his happiest years. The talk one summer-day in 1842 fell on the question, which period of life is happiest: they turned to him: he smiled and answered that *he* thought it "about sixty." "I am too serious," he had often owned with pain; but now he could write, "I think the ice melts." His friends noted the gradual freeing of his manner, the growing delight in life, in earth, in men. "The longer I live, the more I enjoy." "I

never hoped so strongly and so patiently:" this in the era of *isms*, when Abolitions, Transcendentalisms, Communities, were in the air. A *patient* hope; a quiet, peaceful cheer, "not made up of flashes, but shining gently, steadily." His boyhood he looked back on as a dark time; his age he felt as an increasing youth.

The last summer was probably the very happiest and youngest he had spent on earth. Leaving his seashore, he went, for once, among the hills. When the first of August came, the villagers gathered to hear him celebrate the anniversary of the then recent Emancipation of the slaves in the West Indies: his very last words in public were a joyful prophecy of their sure Emancipation in his own land through the growing reverence for man as Man,—his "one sublime idea." "Mighty powers are at work in the world. Who can stay them? God's word has gone forth, and 'it cannot return to him void.' A new comprehension of the Christian spirit, a new reverence for humanity, a new feeling of brotherhood, and of all men's relation to the common Father,—this is among the signs of our times. We see it: do we not feel it? Before this all oppressions are to fall." ("Growing old." *Life*, 651-3.) "Never such hope." (454.) "The last summer." (689-698.)

Then came a journey a little farther among the hills; and there, with the light of a sunset on his face, he died. His last words, caught by a friend, were, "I have received many messages from the Spirit."



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